



Moderator's Guide

Innovation and Technology: Making Choices for Your Community

What should your community do to make the most of the economic potential of innovation and technology? This discussion guide is designed to stimulate thinking on the question and to help you choose a path to the future for your community. The guide does not advocate a specific solution or point of view. Rather, it is intended to inspire thoughtful examination of differing points of view and a movement towards common ground around which the community can make plans for its future.

Equipment/Supplies Needed

- *Innovation and Technology* discussion guide for each participant
- Pre-Forum and Post-Forum Questionnaires for each participant
- Pencils/pens for completing the questionnaires
- Flip chart and markers
- Ground rules poster (optional)

Free copies of the discussion guide and questionnaires can be obtained from the Southern Growth Policies Board. Call Connie Hansen at (919) 941-5145 to place an order. The materials can also be downloaded and copied from Southern Growth's Web site, at www.southern.org.

Suggested Format for a Two-Hour Forum

Welcome (5 minutes)

Introduce yourself and tell participants about the organization(s) convening the forum. Stress the co-sponsorship if several organizations are involved.

Give a brief introduction about the importance of innovation and technology, noting that innovation – new ideas that lead to new products and new ways of doing things – creates economic prosperity. Innovation leads not only to new companies, but also helps existing companies remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Explain that the results of the forum will be shared with Southern leaders through the Southern Growth Policies Board, by saying something such as the following:

This booklet was prepared by the Southern Growth Policies Board. Southern Growth is a public-private partnership of 14 states, including our own. Formed by the region's governors in 1971, Southern Growth Policies Board develops and advances visionary economic development policies. It provides a forum for collaboration among a diverse cross-section of the region's governors, legislators, business and academic leaders and the economic- and community-development sectors.

Participating in this forum means that many Southern leaders will hear your views. Southern Growth plans to prepare a report on forum results that will be presented to the governors and other Southern leaders at the 2006 Conference on the Future of the South, scheduled for June 4-6, 2006 in Louisiana. You are also invited to attend the conference to hear what others are saying about future directions for innovation and technology in the South.

Pre-Forum Questionnaire (5 minutes)

Ask participants to complete the Pre-Forum Questionnaire. Explain to participants that the Pre-Forum Questionnaire is a way to get everyone focused on the issue and a way for each participant to take inventory of their initial feelings on the issue. Tell them that there will be another questionnaire for them at the end of the forum.

Ground Rules (5 minutes)

Review ground rules with participants before beginning the discussion. Make clear that the forum is not a debate. Stress that there is work to do (this is not just a free flowing discussion with no purpose), and the work is to move toward making plans for the community's future. The work will be done through deliberation.

The moderator should guide the discussion yet remain neutral. Make sure that:

- Everyone understands that this is not a debate.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate.
- No one or two individuals dominate.
- Every approach is considered fairly and fully.
- An atmosphere for discussion and analysis of alternatives is maintained.
- Participants listen to each other.

The moderator should ask the group if they agree with these rules and invite them to suggest others to add to the list.

Moderators can call the Kettering Foundation at (800) 433-7834 to request a free poster that outlines these ground rules.

Personal Stake (15 minutes)

Connect the issues to people’s lives and concerns by getting participants to talk about their personal experiences with the issue. This makes the issue human rather than abstract. Some questions you might ask include:

- How have new technologies made your home life easier?
- Do you have access to the Internet at home? How does this make your life easier?
- Have innovations in health care benefited you or other family members?
- How have new innovations or technologies changed your work life?
- Have new technologies created any problems or concerns for you?”

Reviewing Possible Approaches (45 minutes)

The next step is to review and deliberate each approach, one-by-one, roughly 15 minutes each. Deliberation requires weighing the “pros” and “cons” of different approaches so it is important to be sure that both are fully aired. Questions to help ensure a fair and balanced examination of each approach include:

- What makes this approach a good idea? What do you find most appealing about it?
- What are the costs or consequences associated with this approach? Is there a downside to this approach?
- How might others see this approach?
- What would someone who favors this approach be likely to say?
- If we followed this approach, what would be the effects on your life?
- How might your concerns differ if you were poor? Lacked a high school education? Were a business owner?

Review of Approach One: Focus on Building Knowledge

Begin with an overview of the approach, such as:

Knowledge and ideas spark the development of new processes and products. If we focus on building knowledge – among people, institutions and businesses – home-grown innovation and high technology businesses and products will follow.

Initiate discussion by using the general questions outlined above or some below:

- How well do you think your community’s schools prepare children for careers that require skills in science and math? What impact do you think reforming math and science education would have on the community’s future?

- Are there colleges or universities in the community or surrounding area? Are there opportunities for businesses and citizens to learn about the research taking place at these, or other, institutions? How might you take better advantage of these resources in your area?
- How knowledgeable do you think businesses in your community are about technology trends? How might this information help them be more competitive?
- What are the barriers or challenges to making sure that everyone in the community is computer and Internet literate?

Review of Approach Two: Focus on Encouraging Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs turn ideas into jobs and wealth. New companies have been responsible for nearly all “radical” innovations since World War II – from the heart valve to the personal computer. We need to focus on supporting entrepreneurs in turning innovative ideas into businesses.

Initiate discussion by using the general questions outlined above and/or some of the following:

- How active a role do you think government should play in encouraging entrepreneurship?
- Do you think that young people in your community see entrepreneurship as a job option in their future?
- How would you describe your community in terms of its support system for new businesses? Are there business incubators, networking opportunities, and assistance programs? How might the community be more supportive?

Review of Approach Three: Focus on Recruiting Innovation

Recruitment has brought many jobs to the region. We just need to turn our attention to different types of industries and facilities. Targeted recruitment in emerging industries such as biotechnology and nanotechnology can bring in jobs more quickly, and with more certainty, than other approaches.

Initiate discussion by using the general questions outlined above or some below:

- What assets or strengths does your community have that would be attractive to high-technology companies?

- Do you currently work with other communities in your region to market yourselves to companies? What benefits, if any, do you think the community would gain from working with neighboring communities to attract high-technology companies?
- How up-to-date is the infrastructure in your community? What, if anything, needs improvement?
- Does your community's workforce have the skills needed by high-technology companies? How might you address any weaknesses in this area?

Working through tensions or conflicts (15 minutes)

Help participants see and work through the tensions or conflicts between the approaches by asking some of the following types of questions:

- What do you see as the tensions between the approaches?
- Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from the approach that is receiving so much criticism?
- Should communities focus on building knowledge among people, institutions and businesses, EVEN IF it takes a long time to show results?
- Should communities focus on encouraging entrepreneurship, EVEN IF a high percentage of new companies fail?
- Should communities focus on recruiting innovation, EVEN IF it means providing and maintaining expensive state-of-the art infrastructure?

Moving towards a shared sense of purpose (15 minutes)

Remind people that the objective is to work toward a decision. Test to see where the group is going by asking questions such as:

- Can someone suggest areas that we seem to have in common?
- What values appear to be in conflict?
- What trade-offs are we willing (or unwilling) to accept?
- What are we willing to do as individuals or a community to solve this problem?

Ending the Forum (15 minutes)

Before ending a forum, take a few minutes to reflect on what has been accomplished. Questions like the following have been useful:

Individual Reflections

- Did you hear anything that surprised you?
- Has your thinking about the issue changed?
- Has your thinking about other people's views changed?
- How has your perspective changed as a result of what you've heard in this forum?

Group Reflections

- What remains unsolved for this group?
- Can we identify any shared sense of purpose or direction?
- What trade-offs are we, or are we not, willing to make to move in a shared direction?

Next Steps

- What do we still need to talk about?
- How can we use what we learned about ourselves in this forum?
- Do we want to meet again?

Post-Forum Questionnaire (5 minutes)

Ask participants to complete the Post-Forum Questionnaire. Please collect both pre- and post-forum questionnaires and return them along with a *Moderator Summary Sheet* to Linda Hoke, Southern Growth Policies Board, P.O. Box 12293, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709. This information will be used to help inform Southern leaders about citizens' views on this issue.

4. What were areas of disagreement, if any?

5. Did the group identify possible actions or next steps? Please describe.

6. What unique information came out of the forum that our leaders need to know?

Please return this *Moderator Summary Sheet*, along with pre- and post-forum questionnaires, to: Linda Hoke, Southern Growth Policies Board, P.O. Box 12293, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709.